DOZUKI

How to Take Great Photos

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SUMMARY

Great photos can turn a good how-to guide into an outstanding DIY tutorial. This guide will show you how to take excellent photos of your procedure to help you create an easy-to-follow guide for your readers.

Step 1 — How to Take Great Photos

- This guide will walk you through how to take great photos for your guides using a few real world examples.

- Keep in mind while taking your photos that you're not just relaying to your audience what you did; you are providing a clear, easy-to-follow procedure that anyone can repeat.

- Place whatever you're doing in the center of the frame. We're going to tie these shoelaces, so we centered the shot on the currently untied laces.

Step 2

- The first item to consider when taking pictures is how to orient the object you're working on in the guide.

- Our first image here isn't necessarily bad; the photo is well-lit, free of clutter, and the action is right in the center of the frame. Consider this, though: if your guide text said to cross the right hand over the left, which would be which? Are you referencing the model's right hand or the reader's?

- The second picture is taken from a side view. Now "left" and "right" are more obvious, but a reader may still be confused by the pictures. This view may also not be very beneficial for showing all the necessary actions.

- The third photo shows a true first-person perspective, making the directions far easier for your audience to follow. This is what your readers will see when they look down to tie their own shoe (with a foot inside the shoe, of course).

Step 3
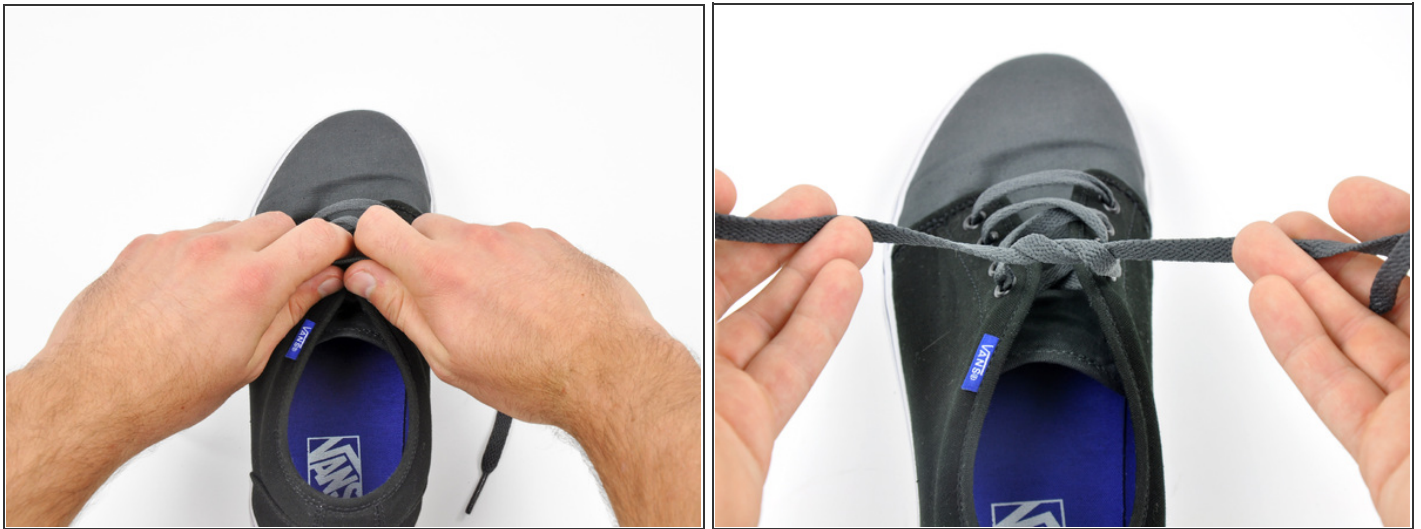
- Guide images should include hands, whenever possible. The hands should demonstrate the described actions in each step.

- Be sure not to cover up the action with your hands. Sometimes this will mean holding an item or tool differently than you normally would. It may feel awkward, but the resulting image will show the action much more clearly.

  - The second picture here demonstrates good hand placement. Why, you ask? You tell us: is the first photo showing a bunny ear or loop-swoop-and-pull method?

Step 4

- When you've got a camera mounted on a tripod, it's tempting to want to look through the viewfinder to take your pictures. As you'll notice, though, this can lead to forearms dominating the foreground of your photos.
- Try to get level with what you're working on to achieve a more natural-looking perspective. It may be necessary to squat down and reach awkwardly around the tripod.
  - While this may not be the most comfortable position to take photos in, the pictures will come out much better.

Step 5

- Zoom in to get detailed shots of actions, especially when performing smaller or more intricate tasks. The first picture here is good, but the second image is even better because you can see how the two laces are intertwined.

- Don't try to fit the entire subject in every picture that you take. When pulling the loop of one shoelace through the hole of the other, is it necessary to show what the heel looks like?

- That covers the basics of taking great guide pictures. There are, however, a few other issues that may arise when shooting photos that need to be discussed.

Step 6

- Both pictures shown in this step are of the same action. However, if we hadn't told you would you be able to tell?

- Even though you probably never use a screwdriver by holding it like a pencil, doing so in your photos allows the reader to actually see what's going on.

Step 7

- Glare will often find creative ways of rearing its ugly head whenever you are photographing objects with reflective surfaces.

  - Not only does our monitor have a large glare at the top right-hand corner of the LCD, but the logo along the bottom of the display bezel is completely blown out by the light.

- By taking a step back from our photo setup, we can see that the light at the front right and the table surface is causing the glare.

Step 8

- Glare occurs when too much light is reflected into your camera off of the object in your picture. Identify the source of light causing the glare and adjust or eliminate it.
  - Remember to look through the camera's viewfinder periodically when adjusting the position of your lights. Glare will appear in different spots depending on the angle you're looking from.
- Raising the right front lamp eliminated the glare on the LCD, but we were still left with a blown out logo due to the reflection of our own white table.
- Unwanted reflections can be removed with the proper placement of a piece of poster board. You may use black or white, depending on your specific situation. We set our black poster board on the table directly in front of the monitor, and...

Step 9

- ...voilà! The distracting glare on the LCD is gone and we can now read the logo at the bottom of the monitor.

  - It is very difficult to remove every reflection when working with highly reflective materials such as shiny plastic. Do your best and be sure to keep plenty of even lighting on your subject for every shot.

- Now you know how to take great guide photos. Get out there and show the world how to do something!

This document was last generated on 2012-11-17 04:27:09 PM.